



June 5, 2007

Commission's Secretary
Office of the Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th St., S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20554

Subject: Designation of 2-1-1 and 5-1-1 as abbreviated dialing codes
CC Docket NO. 92- 105

LINC/ 2-1-1 of the Memphis Public Library & Information Center hereby submits its Reply Comments to Public Notice DA 07-2017, released May 7, 2007. The Public Notice requested comments on the status of implementation of the 211 and 511 Dialing Codes. Further, the Public Notice requested comments on actions the Commission should take if these Dialing Codes are not widely used. LINC/2-1-1 is limiting its comments to the status of 2-1-1 service in Tennessee.

LINC/2-1-1 employs 12 full-time and 2 part-time staff members, of which approximately half are assigned to the 2-1-1 Team. The LINC Department of the Memphis Public Library & Information Center has provided comprehensive information and referral services for a several county, multi-state areas since 1975. In February of 2005, we formally launched our 2-1-1 line and since that time have fielded an increasing number of 2-1-1 calls. In 2006, we answered over 7600 calls on the 2-1-1 line, and that number is steadily increasing – as evidenced by the fact that we have already answered about 8100 2-1-1 calls in the first five months of 2007.

We provide 2-1-1 services to a six county area of west Tennessee (including Memphis, its surrounding suburbs and several more rural counties) serving a population of 1,071,242 residents (US Census 2006 Estimates). Shelby County, in which Memphis is located, is the most populous in the state. Currently, our

database of service providers used for making referrals has listings for over 1700 agencies and organizations and over 3400 programs. – and we are constantly expanding our listings.

The most common reasons clients give for calling our 2-1-1 service is for information on financial assistance for life necessities such as utilities and rent, shelter and housing assistance, and a wide array of government services. Even if a customer can find the agency they seek after scouring the telephone book (and often they cannot), the listings there do not provide information such as how to request a replacement social security card, or which department to call to get a street light replaced, or the eligibility requirements for the senior property tax rebate, or when a specific support group meets – all of which callers get (for free) when they call our 2-1-1 line.

Our placement in a public library has additional benefits for our 2-1-1 callers – such as the ability to refer callers in need of a cancer support group to our library’s award-winning Health Information Center, or job-seekers to our well-known JobLINC bus, or parents looking for parenting support programs to our family activity and parenting programs,. This year we referred hundreds of callers to local EITC and tax assistance centers, many of which were located in Memphis Public Library locations, and where we also had supplies of tax forms and public computers available.

Of particular note is our growing role in disaster-related information and referral. We continue to be involved in disaster I & R for Hurricane Katrina and Rita evacuees. Although Tennessee was not directly in the path of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita,, we were directly in the evacuation path for many thousands of evacuees. In fact, the great majority of evacuees who evacuated north to Tennessee from the Gulf Coast evacuated to Shelby County. This “second tier disaster” required a disaster response in our community, and LINC/2-1-1 was heavily involved in providing updated information – both in the immediate response period when resources changed hourly, and in the more long-term recovery phase. Our call center expertise was recognized by our local Convention and Visitors Bureau, which had set up a separate Hurricane Information Line, but soon asked us for assistance and, after two weeks, transferred the line to the 2-1-1 call center directly.

It is significant to note that a number of evacuees from Louisiana called 2-1-1 for information specifically because they were familiar with 2-1-1 in their home state. After the immediate “crisis” passed, we continued to be involved s a catalyst to ensure coordination of the emerging case management services, and continued to be the designated “point of entry” for disaster-related information and referral. As recently as last month, Katrina case management agency staff continue to call on us for assistance in finding needed resources for their long-term recovery clients.

Like many other 2-1-1 call centers, LINC/2-1-1 continues to play a leadership role in advancing information and referral services in our area, through coordinating our local Information and Referral Alliance and through continuing active participation on the board of our state AIRS affiliate. Many agencies and service providers throughout our state participate indirectly in 2-1-1 through working with one of the ten 2-1-1 call centers in Tennessee; they refer clients to us, they call us for assistance, they use our database, they provide links to our databases on their web pages, they help us keep our resources current and updated. Indeed, many local agencies and programs use 2-1-1 as a “front door” to help them reach a larger audience and know that our trained staff, updated database and accessible, easy-to-remember number help ensure that customers in need can find their services when they need them..

LINC/2-1-1 works closely with many community partners - including our local United Way of the Mid-South, which has supported our I & R service for over thirty years, our local Aging Commission, our local Emergency Management Agency, and our local 24 hour Crisis Center.- to ensure that residents in our area get clear, helpful, updated information about a wide variety of community services, as well as opportunities to volunteer and to donate goods and services.

We respectfully request that the Commission find the public is well-served by the use of 2-1-1, that the Commission continue to support the 2-1-1 Dialing Code for this purpose, and that the Commission use its authority to facilitate more widespread use of the service.

Sincerely,

Judith Drescher
Director of Libraries
Memphis Public Library & Information Center
Memphis, TN